

# Knox Regional Communications Center Executive Board

Wednesday  
February 26, 2019  
2:00 p.m.

A meeting of the Executive Board of the Knox Regional Communications Center took place on **Wednesday, February 26, 2019 at 2:00 p.m.** in the Knox County Emergency Management Agency Office.

**Executive Board members in attendance:** Knox County EMA Director Ray Sisk; Rockland PD Chief Chris Young; Camden Fire Chief Chris Farley; Craig Cooley, Rockport Police Department; Jesse Thompson, Union EMS; Adam Miceli, Rockland Fire/EMS; and Ruston Barnard, Rockland Fire/EMS (*left at 2:43 p.m.*). **Members absent:** None.

**Others in attendance:** Administrative Assistant Candice Richards; Knox Regional Communications Director Linwood Lothrop; Acting Deputy Communications Director Wally Tower; Sheriff Tim Carroll (*left at 3:59 p.m.*); Knox County Administrator Andrew Hart; Rockport Fire Chief Jason Peasley (*left at 3:19 p.m.*); and Rockland Fire Chief Chris Whytock (*left at 3:19 p.m.*).

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| <b>I.</b>   | <b>2:00</b> | <b>Meeting Called To Order</b>   |
| <b>II.</b>  | <b>2:01</b> | <b>Discussion Items:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Personnel Changes</li><li>2. Review of Last Commissioner's Meeting</li><li>3. Discuss Format/Feedback for KRCC Director</li></ol>  |
| <b>III.</b> | <b>2:15</b> | <b>Work Session:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Develop List of Positive Actions That Can Be Taken With Regards to the Police Emergency Dispatch Legislation</li><li>2. Develop List of Recruitment/Retention Activities</li></ol> |
| <b>IV.</b>  |             | <b>Other Business</b>  |
| <b>V.</b>   |             | <b>Adjourn</b>   |

## **I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Chris Farley at 2:00 p.m.

## **II. Discussion Items**

### 1. Personnel Changes – Update from Wally Tower.

- Dispatcher Tori Bathgate has resigned to go work for LifeFlight – it's a 9-5 office job with no nights and weekends, for more money, so no one could blame her for taking the job. Other public safety agencies are having the same problem. It's not unique to the State of Maine either.
- The Center does have a new dispatcher – Jonathan Powers. He worked for the Center a few years back (2001 – 2009) and has been working for the State in the meantime.
- The supervisor position has been posted and they are in the 3 month study period for the April 25<sup>th</sup> test.
- We are working on two applications.
- The County has been advertising on the radio on February 9<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> but nobody knows if that has resulted in any applications or not.

- The Sheriff's Office employees, through the Fraternal Order of Police union got MPERS three years ago. The NCEU union (corrections and dispatch) has also requested MPERS but nothing has been agreed to yet.

## 2. Review of Last Commissioner's Meeting.

Chris Farley said that he put this on the agenda because he wanted to acknowledge that an elected official had made some negative and incorrect comments that knocked the morale issues in the KRCC back a bit.

Wally Tower said that some things were said that were not accurate, such as the statement that he had gotten in an argument with his supervisor at the Sheriff's Office and quit; that never happened. He had decided it was best to not go be patrol administrator because it wasn't where his heart was. He that he was sick after watching the video of the Commission meeting where the comments were made, and that both he and the Center staff were demoralized by it. He suggested that outside interference is what's impacting the Center, including elected officials and the HR consultant.

There was a discussion about the comment made during the Commission meeting that the Deputy Communication Director's position isn't going to budgeted after December 31<sup>st</sup> of this year. This is technically true for all County positions since funding is approved one year at a time. Wally was concerned about staying in his role in the KRCC because he was afraid he wouldn't have a job after December 31<sup>st</sup>. The Board discussed the fact that there's no way to know what the Budget Committee will do until the time comes, but that the deputy director position is not going away at the end of the year. The position itself wasn't temporary – only Wally's time there until/if when he decides to leave the airport and stay in Dispatch permanently. Also, one commissioner making negative comments does not mean she speaks for the whole Commission. Both of the other two commissioners have been, and still are, strong supporters of both the KRCC and the deputy director position.

Administrator Hart apologized for anything he said during the above mentioned Commission meeting that offended anyone. He said he supports Linwood, the KRCC, and Wally. He has reached out to Municipal Resources Inc. to review the organization of the dispatch center since they don't "have a dog in the fight" and can look at this situation and help show the need for the deputy director position to the Budget Committee.

There was a brief discussion about taking the undesignated funds and dedicating them in reserve accounts so the Budget Committee can't touch the funds and use them to offset the budget. Those funds do have an intended purpose and aren't "extra money".

Chris Farley said that he would be willing to talk to Commissioner Meriwether since she represents the City of Rockland to help clear up misconceptions. He asked if the Executive Board should have an agenda item on a future commission meeting but Administrator Hart didn't think that was necessary since the other two commissioners supported the Center and the position. Members of the Board expressed concern that the point needs to be driven home to the Budget Committee that the position is permanent, needed, and supported by the Executive Board and the employees. Administrator Hart suggested that it would go a long way to have a room full of end users attending the budget meeting this fall. Even though the Budget Committee can't actually cut a position, they *can* cut an amount from the budget and there's not enough funding in the dispatch budget to fund the position from elsewhere. The quarterly budget meeting hasn't been set yet – probably the last week of March.

- Chris Young made a motion to send the Budget Committee a letter expressing the Board's position, and make it clear that if the position gets cut, they will own the consequences, and services are going to suffer. Craig seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor.

Chris Young volunteered to draft a letter and will send it to everyone for feedback before it's finalized and signed by the Board members.

3. Discuss Format/Feedback for KRCC Director.

There was a brief discussion about the purpose of the Board having a meeting to give Linwood some feedback annually. Linwood was looking for a better way to get feedback from the end users as part of his annual review – constructive criticism, what he does right, what could be better, etc. The idea is to provide feedback on the product, not the person, since Linwood's performance as a County employee is evaluated by the County Administrator, not the Executive Board.

Chief Farley suggested that it would be helpful if there were any benchmarks for dispatch centers so the Board would have something to evaluate the Center against. Linwood said he would see what he could find out.

### **III. Work Session**

1. Develop List of Positive Actions That Can Be Taken With Regards to the Police Emergency Dispatch Legislation.

The letter was passed around for the board members to sign. Linwood will be taking it with him when he goes up to Augusta for the hearing and to testify.

2. Develop List of Recruitment/Retention Activities.

Some points and suggestions made by the Board:

- Find a way to give dispatchers closure after stressful calls – they don't know what happened in the end and they don't get thanked.
- You've got to get word out to those high school students graduating with some interest in public safety. The Center does plan on participating in Job Fairs.
- Younger employees want a job that is meaningful and makes them feel appreciated.
- There needs to be some low-cost things that make the dispatchers happy and brightens their day.
- Find ways to recognize the employees.
- Continue including the dispatchers in press releases when listing the agencies that participated in an incident - it means something to them.
- Wally should contact agencies when something went well and remind those agencies to send a letter to the KRCC recognizing their work.
- There are still agencies calling dispatchers chewing them out when they did something wrong, even if they corrected their mistake. It was agreed it was inappropriate that this happens. It doesn't happen as much as it used to.
- Dispatch staff should be invited when agencies have a multi-agency debrief after a big event. The staff here were impacted by it too and might have feedback.

### **IV. Other Business**

Telecommunicators Week

April 14 - 20 is National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week. Linwood suggested that the Board write a letter to the employees to let them know they are doing a good job and are appreciated. He said he would get the information on the week and the specific dates to everyone.

Upcoming Meetings

March 28<sup>th</sup> at the Commission Hearing Room for Linwood's annual review.

**V. Adjourn**

Meeting adjourned at 4:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Candice Richards  
Administrative Assistant